

AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
BURGESSES AND HERITORS
OF THE
Royal Burghs of Scotland,
ON
THE PRESENT IMPERFECT AND ARBITRARY SYSTEMS
OF ELECTION ESTABLISHED IN THE BURGHs.

IN WHICH ARE POINTED OUT,
THE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF THESE SYSTEMS, AND
THE GREAT ADVANTAGES THAT WOULD RESULT TO THE
BURGHs AND THE WHOLE COUNTRY AT LARGE, FROM A
MORE GENERAL DIFFUSION OF THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE
AT THE ELECTIONS.

EDINBURGH:

PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED *gratis* BY THE
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M,DCC,LXXXIII.

1568/8792.



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A D D R E S S, &c.

G E N T L E M E N,

THE present contracted and arbitrary modes of electing the Town-Councils and Representatives in Parliament, for the Royal Burghs of Scotland, have long been the subject of general and just complaint. Systems, which subjugate our Burghs to the absolute direction and government of a few men, self-elected, and totally independent of the great body of the burghesses and inhabitants, are surely most absurd, iniquitous, and oppressive; and repugnant to every principle of justice, of reason, and of liberty.

To illustrate the truth of this position, we shall here consider, briefly, the nature and tendency of these systems; and in treating of this subject, we shall, for the sake of perspicuity, divide it into two parts, or branches. In the first, we shall speak of the election of Town-councils.—In the second, of the election of the Representatives in Parliament,—and, by way of conclusion, we shall point out the great national advantages which must certainly result from a thorough change of our present Burgh Systems.

1. *Of the Election of the Councils.*] It is an indisputable maxim, that the persons who have purchased their admission into, or who contribute towards the support of any society, have a right to nominate those men to whom the management of the public affairs of that society shall be committed.—

This maxim holds good in all public trading, and banking companies, both in this country and other nations. In these societies, it is the universal and invariable rule, that the individual holders of shares in the common fund, have a voice in the appointment of those persons who are entrusted with the direction of the public business of the company.—In every other society, instituted for whatever purpose, the same rule is, or ought to be uniformly observed.—It is also a maxim in politics, which is demonstrated by experience, and grounded on an accurate observation of human nature, “That governing men ought not to hold their power in an absolute independence of the people governed, otherwise they will generally disregard the welfare of the people, and pursue plans of separate interest or gratification for themselves and their associates.” In all free states, therefore, it has been established as a fundamental regulation, that the *governors* should be elected by the *governed*, and be accountable to them for their conduct.

Let us now compare, with these maxims, the constitution of our Royal Burghs. Are the members of our Councils elected by us the Burghesses?—Are they accountable to us for their conduct?—Have we, the Burghesses, any share in the disposal or management of our public funds?—To each of these questions, every Gentleman, to whom we now address ourselves, must, without hesitation, return a negative answer. We all know, Gentlemen, from sad experience, that, by the present systems, the Councils of the Burghs of Scotland are allowed to elect their successors in office; * have the absolute management of the Burgh-revenues; and are not accountable

* 'Tis true, in some of the Burghs, the members of corporations have the right of electing their Deacons, but this right is so fettered and restricted by the Councils, that it is really no privilege at all.

countable to the Burgeſſes for their miſapplications or embezzlements of theſe revenues.

Here then is a deſcription of a government totally repugnant to every maxim of true policy, in which the *rulers* are wholly *independent* of the *ruled*. But let us proſecute this ſubject a little farther, and let us attend to the conſequences of ſuch ſystems.

The Magiſtrates and Councils, by being thus ſuffered to nominate their ſucceſſors in office, have it in their power to continue themſelves, or their adherents, in the adminiſtration, as long as they may chuſe *. Thus jundos and parties are formed in the ſeveral burghs, who, by electing themſelves from year to year, become, as it were, the *perpetual* governors of theſe communities; and the injured burgeſſes being wholly excluded from every participation in public affairs,—being reduced to mere cyphers in the ſociety, have no remedy left for the correction of abuſes. “Theſe jundos and parties have the uncontrollable management of all public buſineſs, have the ſole exerciſe of the judicative and magiſtrative powers, have the abſolute diſpoſal of the burgh-revenues, and of all places of truſt and of profit in the gift of the burgh. Theſe men, in their magiſtratical capacities, may abuſe their power, may peculate the public revenues, and yet, however odious they may be to the body of the burgeſſes, they can, by the preſent mode of election, retain their ſeats in the Council in ſpite of every effort to remove them †.”—Is not then, Gentlemen, our ſituation moſt diſtreſſing, thus to be ſubjected to ſystems, the moſt abhor-

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* Nothing is more deſtructive to a community, than the continuance of authority too long in the ſame hands. It always tempts men to abuſe power; and ſubverts that ſucceſſive change of Magiſtracy which is the fundamental conſtitution of all equal governments, where the whole community ought to have their turns of commanding and obeying. *Moyle's Tracts*.

† See Letters of Zeno, addreſſed to the Citizens of Edinburgh, p. 28.

rent to liberty, and the most injurious in their consequences?—A few of these last we shall now proceed to mention.

The unhappy consequences of leaving Magistrates, without any check or controul, are too visible in all our Burghs. The men in office, instead of being actuated by a desire to advance the public welfare, exhibit to us, by their conduct, that they are influenced only by narrow, selfish, mercenary principles; that they have no other objects in view, but to promote their own private interests, at the expence of the common good.—The internal police of the Burghs is almost totally neglected.—The public revenues are seldom laid out for the benefit of the community, but either shamefully embezzled;—or wasted in rioting and drunkenness, for which every pretext is laid hold of;—or prostituted to the vile purposes of securing to the factions in power that political influence, so unjustly usurped, and so odious to the burghesses at large*.

These general assertions might be supported by innumerable instances; but to you, Gentlemen, these instances would be totally unnecessary. Your own experience and observation must suggest sufficient proofs in confirmation of every thing we have advanced†. But what ought particularly to alarm us at this time, is, that the Magistrates and Councils not only dissipate and embezzle the public revenues, but have really, in their public capacities, contracted such enormous debts, that there is no fund from which they can be discharged; and these debts are continually on the increase.—As the Governor and Directors of a Banking Company, by their public

acts

* See Lord Kaim's Sketches of the History of Man, vol. 2.

† We shall here mention one general instance of the misadministration of Councils, and that is, the almost total alienation of the large landed property which formerly belonged to the communities of the Burghs. These lands, which were granted

acts and deeds, bind the whole partners of the Company; so it is a melancholy truth, that the Magistrates and Councils of Burghs, as Representatives of the Community, do oblige the whole Members of the Community for payment of the public debts. If the towns common good, then, should be inadequate to discharge these debts, as in most Burghs it now is, and in all it soon will be, the public creditors must either attach our property for their payment, or, what is equivalent, the Councils must, with or without the sanction of Parliament, impose on the burghesses and inhabitants, taxations for the discharge of the towns debts.

These are alarming circumstances, and well deserving your most attentive consideration.—These events must, from the nature of things, take place one day or another; and if you do not interpose in time, and prevent the further and total dilapidation of your public funds, the evil we have mentioned must be inevitable.—To discover a remedy, therefore, corrective of these public abuses, is surely of the last importance to us all; but before we can properly do this, we must endeavour to investigate their cause.—The *original* cause, then, we clearly discover in a violation

granted by our Kings to every Royal Burgh, for the purpose of defraying, by their annual profits, public expences, and erecting public works, have been either most shamefully alienated, or feued for such trifling duties, that they are hardly worth the collecting; many of these lands being now let at above a hundred times the sum they are feued at!—"This unjustifiable method (says Maitland, in his History of Edinburgh) is still practised. Alas! friends must be served at the expence of the city, and prejudice of the injured citizens."—It is to be hoped, however, that the gentlemen now in the Councils of the Burghs, ashamed of the misconduct of their predecessors in office, will no longer strive to support systems so liable by their nature to abuse, but, generously sacrificing all selfish considerations to the public good, will, like true patriots, contribute their aid in effecting a reformation, which must restore to their fellow-citizens the enjoyment of constitutional liberty, and all its concomitant advantages.

lation of that fundamental principle in politics, *That the rulers should always be dependent on the ruled.* Now, our Magistrates and Councils are wholly independent of the burgeses and inhabitants of the Burghs, and are at full liberty to act as they please, without the apprehension of controul, or of being ever called to an account for their conduct. Men of sordid mercenary principles, seeing the great advantages to be derived from getting into Council, employ every engine to effect this purpose, as they know, when once in office, they may continue therein so long as *they can agree to domineer and embezzle the public funds.* * Thus, we observe, that those jundos or factions, established in our Cities and Burghs, are often composed of the most worthless of the citizens, who render the office of Magistrate despicable by their conduct, and odious by their oppression. A seperate interest is established, distinct from the interest of the community; and the public welfare is neglected to promote the sordid purposes of individuals.—These, then, are the sources of all our grievances; and, by discovering these, we discover also the remedy for their correction. This remedy is simple and evident. We have only to render the persons in office dependent on, and accountable to us for their conduct. But this never can be thoroughly effected, unless we, the burgeses, are invested with the powers of election. For men, who derive neither sanction nor authority from us, will never study, by their public conduct, to acquire our approbation, or secure our favour. We must therefore endeavour to get into our own hands the right of electing our Magistrates and Council, and when this shall be obtained, our abuses will be completely remedied; for we shall then have it in our power to elect into offices of

* See a Letter by the Right Honourable Lord G—— to the Committee of Burgeses at Aberdeen.

of public trust, able and honest men, from whose administration the public-weal may derive benefit.

This right of election our ancestors actually possessed *, and, in these ages, the Magistrates being under the controul of the burgeses and other judges †, acted like men who wished to promote the public welfare. But of all these privileges, the burgeses were unjustly and illegally deprived, by an act of James III. Parl. Anno 1469. It is not our business, at present, to enter into a discussion of the reasons for passing this Statute ; sufficient it is for us to observe, that no reason could justify an act, which robbed men of their natural and birth-right privileges ; and destroyed that dependence of the *rulers* on the *ruled*, so essential to all free governments.

This Statute, therefore, was certainly a most illegal and unwarrantable stretch of power ; and, though it might have been really intended to correct one evil, it has been productive of evils of a much more dangerous nature. For the *Magistrates* being thus freed from all dependence on the people, and the *people* devided of all influence on the Magistrates, *these* acted without controul, and *these* were obliged to submit without remedy. The legal establishments in most of the Burghs were totally subverted, and various modes of election and government introduced, according to the

* By the *Laws of the Burghs*, it is expressly declared, " That the Provost, Bailies, and Council, shall be chosen annually by the common suffrage of all the honest men of the Burgh."

Leg. Burg. c. 77. 34.

† The conduct of the Magistrates, with respect to the management of the public revenues, was subject to the review of the Great Chamberlain of Scotland. This officer, in his annual circuits through the Burghs, made enquiry, " If faithful compt of the common good was rendered to the community of the Burgh," &c. and accordingly we find, that, by the forms of the Chamberlain-Ayr, the first thing to be done, after fencing the Court, was to call the Magistrates, and all others who had had the management of any of the Town's revenue, to be accused, and answer such things as should be laid to their charge. *Iter Camerarii*, cap. 1. 3. 39. 45, &c.

the interests and views of political leaders. Left to themselves, without check or controul, the Magistrates became inattentive to every rule, but their own will. Men of all descriptions were admitted into the magistracy by the jundos in office; and neither qualifications of any kind, nor even residence within the Burghs, were required. To rectify these abuses, repeated acts of Parliament were made; but alas! these acts, not striking at the root of the corruptions, by changing totally the established systems, were either inadequate to the purposes intended, or disregarded by the Councils*. In short, from this fatal Statute, 1469, have originated all those evils and abuses in the Burghs, of which we now complain.

It may be observed, however, that though the burgessees were thus illegally deprived of their elective powers, the revenues of the Burghs were still under the regulations of the great Chamberlain. But this office, dangerous by excess of power, being suppressed, the Royal Burghs were left in a state of perfect anarchy. The magistracy, being now no longer under any check or controul, seized upon the public revenues, and converted all to their own profit.—These tyrannical and violent proceedings were heavily complained of in the reign of James V.; and a remedy was provided by Act 26. Parl. 1535, “Or-
“ daining the Magistrates to bring yearly to the
“ Exchequer, the compt books of their common-
“ good,

* It would be a tedious business to repeat the various statutes that have been made respecting the government of the Burghs, and qualifications of Magistrates. Suffice it to say, that they have been all totally disregarded, especially in the smaller Burghs, of which many both of the Magistrates and Council reside at places ten or a dozen miles distant from the Burghs, and some not nearer than 20 or 30 miles; nor are they ever seen in the Burghs except at the annual elections, to receive the suffrages of their colleagues in office, or to direct their more important proceedings at an election for Members of Parliament.—

Wide Let. of Civic.

“ good, to be seen and considered by the Lords Auditors, if the same be expended for the common-
 “ weal of the Burghs; and the Burgesſes were or-
 “ dained to be ſummoned, in order to examine and
 “ object to the ſaid compt-books.”—A defect in
 this ſtatute, however, rendered it inadequate to cor-
 rect the grievance complained of; and the Magi-
 ſtrates, ever ready to avoid a public ſcrutiny, defeated
 entirely the purpoſe of the ſtatute, by bringing to the
 Exchequer only the accompt-books of their *expen-
 diture*, without any *rental* of the public revenue to
 found a charge againſt them. To remedy this de-
 ſect, the ſtatute 28. Parl. 1693, was enacted, which
 ſets forth, “ That the Royal Burghs, by the male-
 “ adminiſtration of their Magiſtrates, have fallen
 “ under great debts and burdens, to the diminution
 “ of their dignity, &c. and therefore ordains, that
 “ the Magiſtrates henceforth bring to the Ex-
 “ chequer an exact account, *charge* and *discharge*,
 “ of their whole public good.”—And to enforce
 theſe regulations, a Brieve was iſſued from the Chan-
 cery, commanding the Magiſtrates to preſent their
 accompts to the Exchequer, and ſummoning the
 Burgeſſes to appear and ſtate their objections. This
 laſt ſtatute proved an effectual remedy for prevent-
 ing further embezzlements, by putting means into
 the hands of the Barons of Exchequer to controul
 the accompts of the Magiſtrates.*

Theſe ſalutary regulations were kept in exact ob-
 ſervance till the union of the kingdoms, when the
 Magiſtrates of the Burghs, ſtill anxious to poſſeſs the
 incontrollable management of the public revenues,
 and ſuppoſing the Engliſh Court of Exchequer, eſta-
 bliſhed in Scotland after the union, would overlook
 theſe regulations (which really turned out to be the
 caſe)

* We have been particular in the recital of theſe ſtatutes, as
 the revival of them will form a particular part of our propoſed
 reformation.

safe) forbore to present their accompts in the Exchequer; and the Barons of Exchequer, altho' they still keep up the empty form of directing the Chancery to issue Brieves to the several Burghs, do not exact compliance. "This neglect in the Court of Exchequer, (says Lord Kaimes) is greatly to be regretted; because it reduces the Royal Burghs, by the male-administration of their Magistrates, to the same miserable condition, that is so loudly complained of in the statutes 1535 and 1693."

Thus, Gentlemen, in the foregoing short sketch of the history of the Burghs, we have seen, that the government of the Burghs was originally founded on liberal principles; that a departure from these principles has been productive of the most flagrant abuses. To reform, then, these abuses, we must recur to the original principles, that is, we must communicate to the Burgesses, &c. those elective rights of which they were unjustly robbed by the act 1469, and revive the other statutes 1535 and 1693 *.

We shall now proceed to consider the second branch of our subject; which, as it is of a more general and public nature than the first, so it is consequently of greater importance, and deserving of our most serious attention.

2. *Of the Election of the Representatives in Parliament.*] It is an essential principle of the British Constitution, that every man be represented in Parliament, and that no man can be bound by any law to which he does not consent.† This consent must be adhibited either in person or by delegation. If by delegation,

* See Appendix.

† "But amongst all the rights and privileges appertaining unto us, that of having a share in the Legislation, and being to be governed by such laws as we ourselves shall chuse, is the most fundamental and essential, as well as the most advantageous and beneficial." *Polit. Works of Lord Sommers.*

delegation, the delegate must be chosen, if not by every individual, at least by the majority of each community, entitled to delegate *.

Now, we appeal to you, Gentlemen, how far you enjoy this invaluable privilege of election, which, as British subjects, is your birth-right? Do you elect your Representatives in Parliament? No. The Town-councils are the *sole* electors. Do you elect the Town-councils? No. The Town-councils, we have already observed, elect themselves.—Thus, the Burgesses of Scotland, have not the most distant connection with the legislative body of the realm. They have not the most *indirect* representation in Parliament. The Councils are the absolute electors both of themselves, and of our Representatives in Parliament. Can we then, Gentlemen, be said to enjoy freedom, or the rights of British subjects? Surely not. The people of France, and other enslaved nations, might, with equal propriety, be said to possess these rights, because they have just as great share in their legislature, as we have in ours.

But let us, Gentlemen, attend to the consequences of thus confining the right of election to the Councils. These consequences are numerous, but we shall here mention only a few of them.—It is surely an object of the greatest concernment to this nation, that the people's Representatives in Parliament be men of ability, integrity, and true patriotism; for without these qualities, instead of being of any benefit to their country, the people have every thing to dread from their corruption. But how can we expect representatives possessing these qualities, when factions and jantes are the electors, who make a traffic of the election, and dispose of it perhaps to the highest offerer. “The greatest evil of all (says Lord Kaimes, on this subject) respects the choice of our Representatives in Parliament. The Ma-

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“gistrates

" gistrates of our Burghs, by their riot and intempe-
 " rance, are fit subjects to be corrupted by every ad-
 " venturer, who is willing to lay out his money in
 " purchasing a Seat in Parliament. Hence, the in-
 " famous practice of bribery at elections, which is
 " the cause of many dangerous evils; but what is
 " still most dreadful, tends to fill the House of
 " Commons with men of dissolute manners, void
 " of probity and honour." A few wealthy indi-
 viduals, then, however destitute of virtue, and every
 other necessary quality, may, by corrupt influence,
 secure the representation of our Burghs, not for one
 term only, but for any course of years.—We leave
 it to yourselves, Gentlemen, to judge, Whether or
 not this be our present situation? Are our Repre-
 sentatives in Parliament possessed of the qualities,
 or actuated by the principles of true patriots? Are
 they men of capacity and probity? Are they acquaint-
 ed with the state of our commerce and manufac-
 tures, and attentive to our interests in Parliament?
 In short, are they such men as we would have fixed
 on, had the election been left to ourselves? If they
 are, then we have no reason to complain. But if
 they be men of an opposite character,—if they have
 obtained their seats by purchase, or by influence,—if
 they be destitute of virtue, of ability, and knowledge
 of our particular interests,—if they have, on all oc-
 casions, manifested an open contempt and disregard
 for our approbation or censure, What advantages, it
 may be asked, can we expect from such representa-
 tives, or rather, what detriment have we not to appre-
 hend from their conduct? Can such men be able or
 willing to attend to our commercial and manufactur-
 ing interests in the formation of laws? Will they
 attend to our interests in general? No. Intent only
 on procuring places and pensions for themselves and
 adherents, they will perhaps never once think of the
 public welfare. And shall our lives, our properties,

our

our dearest interests, be committed to the care of such men! Dreadful reflection! In such a situation, can we be safe for a moment! May we not expect to see those persons, who ought to be the protectors of our rights and liberties, become the betrayers of all we hold dear*?

These are considerations of a most alarming nature, and ought to rouse us to active exertions to obtain an alteration of systems, which withhold from us the privilege and security of British subjects, by denying us the right of electing those men, to whom is committed the disposal of our lives and properties. By the laws of the land, we have an indisputable title to be represented in Parliament, that is, to chuse our representatives. It is therefore most illegal and tyrannical, to exclude us from the exercise of this privilege. We equally contribute to the support of government, and are equally qualified, by education and property, with those who are the *present* electors; and why then should we not equally partake in the rights of election, so essential to our political and personal liberty? These privileges, therefore, we ought to *claim, demand, and insist upon, as our undoubted rights and liberties* †.

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* Though, in their political capacities, we can have no confidence in our Members of Parliament; yet, we must acknowledge, that, in their private characters, many of them are persons really deserving of respect. In a particular manner, we must mention the worthy and truly patriotic George Dempster, Esq; who, both in his public and private character, merits our most cordial esteem. To that Gentleman this country is peculiarly indebted for his ever zealous and faithful attention to her interests; and indeed he may, with propriety, be termed the *only* Representative in Parliament for the Burghs of Scotland. But it is impossible for Mr Dempster, or any other honest Member of Parliament, in the predicament in which he stands, to discharge his duty with that independence and freedom with which every good man would wish to act.

† “ And we (says our Claim of *Rights*) do claim, demand, and insist upon all and singular the premises, as our undoubted rights and liberties.”

We have now, Gentlemen, gone through the two branches of our subject. We have shewn, that our present systems are repugnant to the principles of just and equal liberty, and of the British Constitution. We have mentioned some of the dangerous and unhappy consequences which result from these systems, and we have pointed out the remedies. Every one of us, we trust, must be convinced of the truth of what we have advanced, and of the necessity of a reformation. Indeed nothing more forcibly exhibits the tyrannical nature of our systems, than obtruding upon us Magistrates and Representatives, not only without our consent, but often in direct opposition to our inclination and desire: For we may safely affirm, that, had the power of suffrage been vested in the burghesses and heritors at large, they never would have fixed on those men who have frequently occupied these important offices. Is it not then the most grievous bondage, to be thus subjugated to persons, in whom we can have no confidence, and for whom we can have no esteem? But, turning from scenes so dismal, we shall now proceed to the conclusion of this address, in which we shall consider a few of the numerous advantages that must certainly be the happy consequences of a thorough change of systems.

Conclusion.] It is a maxim which we have formerly taken notice of, and which we cannot sufficiently inculcate, "That public office-bearers should hold their offices by public suffrage, and be accountable to the people for their conduct." Into whatever state this principle has been adopted and established as a rule of government, the public officers have always behaved with propriety, moderation, and benignity; and every part of their public duty has been performed in a manner honourable to themselves, and advantageous to the people.

If this principle then were to be introduced into our Burgh Systems, we would soon behold things wear a very different appearance from what they now do. Instead of seeing factions and jundos domineering, without controul, over their fellow-citizens, and rioting unrestrained in the public plunder, we would then perceive that the administrators of our Burghs, conscious of being accountable for their conduct, and of their dependence upon the people, would discharge their public trust with faithfulness, honesty, and zeal; and would treat the people with mildness and complacency. And we, Gentlemen, instead of being, as we now are, cyphers in the community,—instead of being obliged to submit to the insults and oppressions of the men in office, would then acquire that political consideration and importance in the community, that weight and significance in the state, to which we have a title by our property and rank in life, and which would forever secure us against the insolence of our Magistrates, and the neglect of our Representatives. Thus too, we would have it in our power to elect into offices of trust, men *for* whom we could have esteem, and *in* whom we could have confidence. We would then have Magistrates and Representatives acquainted with our local and particular interests, who would be attentive to our welfare, and studious to merit our approbation. And the right of suffrage being then so widely diffused, bribery at elections would forever vanish, because among such a number of electors it would be impracticable*.

“In the next place, (says Lord Kaimes) as there would be no temptation for designing men to convert the burden of the Magistracy (and Representation) into a benefit, factions and parties

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would

* See Zeno's Letters, p. 25, 26.

“ would vanish ; and there would be no less solicitude to shun the burden, than at present is seen to obtain it. None would submit to the burden but the truly patriotic ;—Men who would cheerfully bestow their time, and perhaps their money upon the public ; and whose ambition it would be, to acquire a character, by promoting, by their example, industry, temperance and honesty among their fellow-citizens.”

Let us also consider, Gentlemen, the numberless advantages that must necessarily proceed from the introduction of *just and equal liberty* among the people. “ Men conscious of their freedom, says Zeno*, naturally possess a love of independence, which inspires them with that lively unceasing industry, which never fails to enrich individuals and communities. They are excited to engage in extensive plans for the carrying on of commerce, arts, and manufactures ; and feel their private interest promoted in the advancement of the common prosperity.” We shall also, Gentlemen, lay before you the opinion of that truly respectable member of Parliament, George Dempster, Esq; whose judgment and knowledge of the subject you cannot call in question, and whose authority consequently must be of material weight. “ I am convinced, says Mr Dempster†, of the great utility derived to a free state from *extending, and widening the bottom of its elections* ; and that that circumstance, joined to the trial by juries, in civil and mixed cases, constitute the wide difference betwixt England and Scotland ;—account for their wealth and our poverty ;—the happiness which diffuses itself down to the lowest ranks in England, and the wretchedness which almost extends itself to the higher ranks.

* p. 54.

† This extract is taken from one of Mr Dempster's Letters to the Edinburgh Committee.

" ranks in Scotland ;—the English love for civil
 " liberty, and the Scotch indifference about it ;—
 " the manly openness of their character, and the
 " cunning which our lower classes of people are
 " forced, in self-defence, to make use of. These
 " are my invariable opinions, conceived on due re-
 " flection and observation, and declared on all oc-
 " casions. I am likewise impressed very strongly
 " with another opinion, which I should hope may
 " find its way, as nothing would more facilitate
 " every necessary reformation. It is, *that all ranks*
 " *of the community have a great interest in an exten-*
 " *sion of the right of representation*, as wealth general-
 " ly accompanies liberty, and tends to augment the
 " King's revenues, and the landed man's rents.
 " And, in a legislative view, the more numerous
 " the constituents of an honest Member of Parlia-
 " ment are, the safer and easier he sits. A few
 " may look for personal favours, but the many can-
 " not expect them ; and therefore look at their
 " Member's public conduct only." These are ob-
 " jects of a most important nature, which ought to
 " rouse the attention and zeal of all men who have
 " any portion of public spirit, or any just and large
 " views of private interest.

" Let us reflect too, for a moment, on another most
 " beneficial effect that will certainly result from an
 " administration of our *Burgh revenues* under a proper
 " controul, as directed by the statutes above mention-
 " ed. " The revenues of the Royal Burghs, (says Lord
 " Kaimes) are supposed to be above £.40,000 year-
 " ly. And were this sum, or the half of it, pru-
 " dently expended for promoting arts and industry
 " among the numerous inhabitants of Royal Burghs,
 " the benefit in a country, so narrow and poor as
 " Scotland, would be immense. It would tend to
 " population ;—it would greatly increase industry,
 " manufactures, and commerce, besides augment-
 " ing

“ing the public revenue.”—“If the revenues of
 “our Royal Burghs, (says another very respectable
 “authority*) were well managed, and wisely applied
 “for public uses, the most important and even
 “glorious designs, might, in no great course of
 “time, be carried into execution. Not to mention
 “many schemes of public good, if the half of the
 “present revenues of the Burghs, was, for any
 “time, judiciously employed to found schools of in-
 “dustry, academies of useful arts, and granaries
 “with provision for supply of grain in years of
 “scarcity, such, as in fact, they have in the Dutch
 “towns, can there be any doubt that the most be-
 “neficial consequences would arise to our Burghs
 “and to the whole kingdom?” Thus, Gentle-
 men, instead of having our public funds lavishly
 squandered or misapplied, these funds would then
 be laid out, as they really ought to be, for the wel-
 fare of the Burgeses and inhabitants, from whom
 they are levied; and the Magistrates being then
 under the continual check of the Court of Exche-
 quer, we would have no reason to apprehend any
 further dilapidations of our revenues!

We might go on to specify many other advan-
 tages of a similar nature. These we have mention-
 ed, are *some* of the benefits, that would certainly
 be the consequences of a thorough change of sys-
 tems; and these, although there were no others,
 are surely well worth the acquiring. In order then
 to obtain these advantages, and remedy forever the
 abuses under which we now labour, there are just
two grand objects which we ought always to keep
 in view, and for the attainment of which, every ef-
 fort on our part ought to be employed. The first
 is, *The right of Electing our Magistrates*: The other,
 and most important, is, *The right of Electing our
 Representatives in Parliament*. These, Gentlemen,
 are:

* See Lord G——’s Letter to the Aberdeen Committee.

are glorious privileges; and, by obtaining these, we shall become a free, happy, and respectable people.

But, it may be asked, By what means are we to acquire these privileges? The means, Gentlemen, are simple; and they are in our power. Let petitions, praying for a reformation of our systems, be drawn up and subscribed by the Burgeses and Heritors of the different Burghs*. Let these petitions be laid before Parliament, and we may depend upon it, that a request so reasonable will not be rejected by the Legislature: For the Legislature must comply with the reasonable requests of the people. Be only firm, resolute, and determined, and you need not be afraid of success. "The legislative part" (observes Mr Dempster †) will be easy; for a law, conformable to the universal sentiments of a people, must pass sooner or later."

Animated then by these considerations, let us unite together with firmness and cordiality, in the pursuit of measures for the attainment of these great purposes. Let a sense of that duty which we owe to ourselves, and to our country, stimulate us to bring about a reformation, in which our common prosperity and happiness are so deeply involved.

A P P E N -

* In such Burghs as have not yet publicly declared for reform, it will be proper that meetings of the Burgeses and Heritors be called, and Committees appointed to correspond and co-operate with the Committees in the other Burghs. We therefore solemnly INVITE and SOLICIT the Burgeses and Heritors of the Burghs that have not yet declared, to meet together in a peaceable, legal, and constitutional manner, and appoint Committees for the purposes above mentioned. We hope that there are in the several Burghs many persons of public spirit, who love their country, and desire its prosperity. To these men we earnestly recommend this truly patriotic business of assembling together their fellow Burgeses, and procuring their junction to the *General Association* already formed; and when this *Association* shall be strengthened by the concurrence of all the Burghs of Scotland, its combined power will be irresistible.

† In the Letter formerly alluded to.

A P P E N D I X.

WE have thought it proper to subjoin a sketch of the Plans, which we have prepared for the regulation of the Elections, and which we propose to submit to the General Convention of Delegates, to be held at Edinburgh. This sketch, then, is as follows :

I. *Of the Election of Councils.* 1. That the Corporations in the different Burghs, elect their Deacons or other Representatives in Council, fully and freely, by common suffrage, without the formality of presenting letters to the Council, or without being subject, in any manner of way, to the direction or controul of the Council. — 2. That the Provost, Magistrates, and remanent part of the Council, be elected by the resident and trading Burghesses (not members of any Incorporations) and the resident Heritors possessing property to a certain extent, and subject to all public burdens. — 3. That the election be made by ballot, and that there be kept, in each Burgh, an exact roll of the elector's names, &c. — 4. That for preventing unfaithful management of the public revenues, the Magistrates of the different Burghs be obliged to present annually in the Exchequer the accompt books of their whole receipts and expenditures, and that the same be open for 15 days, in order that the Burghesses may have

A P P E N D I X.

have an opportunity of inspecting the same, in terms of the acts 1535, c. 26. and 1693, c. 28.

II. *Of the Election of the Representatives in Parliament.*] That the Representatives for the several Burghs be elected by the Burgeffes and Heritors (of a certain description *) in their respective Burghs *directly*, without the intervention of Delegates as at present; and that the election be made by ballot.—This method of election, by ballot, we have thought the most proper, as it leaves electors more free and unrestrained, than any other method we are acquainted with.—But, it may be remarked, that the Ballot will only be necessary in the case where a scrutiny shall be demanded; as will appear more clearly from the plans themselves, when laid before the public.

* See Appendix to Zeno's Letters.

F I N I S.

EDINBURGH, 20th Oct. 1783.

At a Meeting of the COMMITTEE of CITIZENS, held this day, it was, *inter alia*,

RESOLVED,

That all official Intelligence, respecting the present Business of Reform, be communicated to the Public through the Channel of *that* News-paper, known by the name of the EDINBURGH EVENING POST,—Published on the Nights of *Tuesday* and *Friday* weekly.

